



Lesson Summaries

SOCIAL STUDIES

Lesson

Lesson

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UNIT 6 – History of the Caribbean Family

History of the African Family in the Caribbean

INTRODUCTION

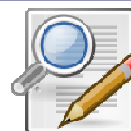
For this particular introduction, a story is necessary. A brief history lesson will be quite useful for you to really understand how present day families can be influenced by the past.

Under the system of slavery, African men and women were not allowed to be legally married. I am sure you have heard of all the hardships endured by Africans under this cruel, inhumane system. All their rights were taken away and they were forced to abide by the injustices of the Europeans who “owned” them. Marriage was another right the Africans could not have. As a result, African men and women faced two choices: they either lived together and had children without being legally married, or men merely visited the woman on occasion over a period of time.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

Identify and discuss the impacts of major historical events on the family life of existing ethnic groups



LESSON

Both these unions were examined in previous lessons. You already looked at family types in the Caribbean and came across common-law union and visiting union. While these exist in the twenty-first century, these are both results of the past.

In the period following Emancipation, the black people of the Caribbean worked out their own patterns of family life and relationships. To some extent these patterns were inherited from slavery, but modified to suit actual living conditions after slavery was over.

TURN TO PAGE 41 OF YOUR TEXT MODULES IN SOCIAL-STUDIES. Read through the table and see other ways in which slavery has impacted the present.

Most working class African families, however, were headed either by a couple living together who had never married in church (common-law) or by a woman whose house was home for her children (visiting union). The children born of both unions were and to some extent are still considered illegitimate according to law.

It is important to note that no one considered children illegitimate if they were born of a couple who lived together like man and wife, even if they had never married in church. This continues today as children of common-law unions are now recognised by law. Legislation now allows for even the woman in this situation to receive benefits if her partner dies.

Family life was very important among African people in the past and they cared deeply about family ties and responsibilities. Children were always wanted even when a family was very poor. Today we can see elements of this as poor African descended couples long for children to complete their family life.

Discipline was and continues to be stressed in all aspects of the family. While small children were fussed over as they get older they may receive floggings or beatings to enforce structure.

CONCLUSION

There are several elements of family life today which are as result of the past. Slavery has dictated the types of union and nature and scope of family life for many African descended couples.